

WORKERS WORLD

Workers and oppressed peoples of the world unite!



Aug. 13, 2009

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50¢

Calif. budget cuts services, slashes jobs

Make corporations pay!

Tax wealthy, oil profits, not workers and poor

By John Parker
Los Angeles

Due to the economic crisis hitting California so acutely, state legislators are dealing with what they say will be a \$60-billion revenue loss projected through June 2010.

However, instead of trying to tap into many possible rich sources of funds, both the Democrats and Republicans came up with a budget that targets social services and the working class but not super-rich monopolies like the oil companies or the banks.

As July ended, the California Legislature approved draconian cutbacks that will even take food directly out of the mouths of children.

Although the state has always attempted to solve its financial crises on the backs of working and poor people, these cuts and their level of disproportionate take-aways from the working class are—like the economic crisis—unprecedented.

Two-thirds of the \$15.5 billion in cuts affect public schools from grades K-12, colleges and universities. Another \$1.3 billion will be taken from workers' salaries by way of mandatory days off, or furloughs. Medi-Cal, which is California's Medicaid program, will lose \$1.3 billion.

Billions of dollars more will be taken from public assistance and health care programs for low-income children, elderly and disabled people. This includes cuts of In-Home Supportive Services. In addition, it will curtail services for women and children who have faced domestic violence.

The cuts to education from grades K-12 will drag California down from 46th to

48th place in state per-pupil spending.

While Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger lauds this budget for not raising taxes on the rich or on wealthy corporations, the budget makers didn't mind playing with the taxes of working people.

By increasing income tax withholdings from paychecks, the state can "borrow" \$600 million in revenue early in the year and then pay it back, without interest, in the form of higher tax refunds or lower taxes next April.

Another trick used to balance the budget this year was to delay workers' paychecks. The state will now get an extra \$900 million by delaying state workers' pay for another day, thus passing on the cost to the next fiscal year beginning July 1, 2010.

This is all without paying interest, like the additional plan to raise \$1.7 billion by upping tax rates on those taxpayers making quarterly estimated payments for the first six months of the year. The state would adjust for the increase during the second half of the year, which would, in turn, lower revenue in the following fiscal year.

Workers forced to loan money to state

California workers, who are disproportionately affected by these policies and are already hurting from past cutbacks and job losses, are being forced to become lenders to the state. The workers, unlike the banks that have been bailed out with trillions of dollars, will not be able to collect interest on their loans.

In addition, local cities and counties and their agencies will see \$3.2 billion of

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DELPHI ZAPS PENSIONS

Bosses exploit bankruptcy laws

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Honduran resisters speak in U.S.

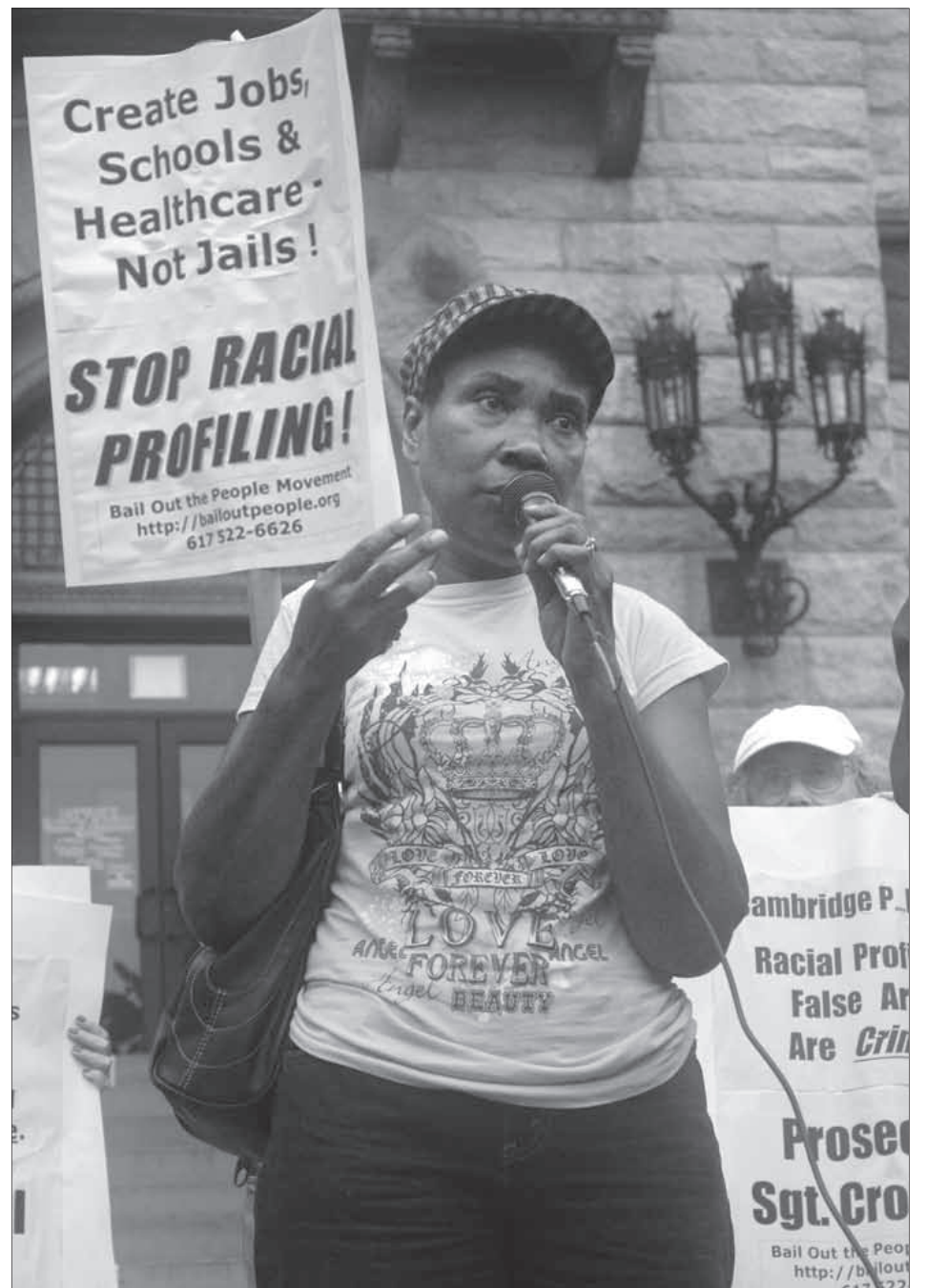


PHOTO: KELLY VALDEZ

Honduran delegation and supporters in Philadelphia on July 31. See page 8.

Solidarity with Professor Gates

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WW PHOTO: LIZ GREEN

Irene O'Bannon speaks at July 29 press conference in support of Professor Henry Gates in Cambridge, Mass. O'Bannon's son was racially profiled by police. See page 3 article.



FORUM ON IRAN

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Viva Palestina reportback: ‘Mission accomplished’ in Gaza

By Dolores Cox
Brooklyn, N.Y.

On July 29 the House of the Lord Church in Brooklyn hosted a standing-room-only report-back meeting led by several participants of the Viva Palestina historic U.S. convoy who returned July 17 and 18 from Gaza City in Palestine. The audience was majority Black.

The activists were part of a delegation of over 200 people from across the U.S. on a mission to deliver humanitarian aid to the besieged people of Gaza. It was organized by British Parliament member George Galloway.

New York City Councilperson Charles Barron and two of his staff members participated in the Gaza convoy. Barron spoke about the racial, religious and cultural diversity of the convoy, including youths who are Hip-Hop artists.

Convoy participants who spoke were representatives from N.Y. Al-Awda—the Palestine Right to Return Coalition, The Indypendent newspaper, International Action Center, Existence Resistance and Malcolm X Grassroots Movement.

Barron—an African American who refers to himself as an elected revolutionary, not an elected politician—commented that he went to Gaza because “the struggle of the Palestinians is the struggle of all oppressed people of color in the U.S., Africa, Latin America and elsewhere; that we all share the same oppressor, the same enemy—vicious U.S. and European white supremacists; that the oppressor is determined to oppress by any means necessary.”

He stated that since the bombing and invasion of Gaza this past December and January—resulting in the deaths of close to 1,500 people—the aggression hasn’t ceased. Barron compared the children of Gaza to children in the U.S., saying, “They have no childhood.” Israel destroyed their schools, playgrounds, toys and homes. In addition, many children are dying of starvation, forced upon them by Israel’s siege and blockade. The 23-day bombing and invasion of Gaza has left them traumatized.

Former U.S. Congressperson Cynthia McKinney was among the convoy participants. She had just recently returned to the U.S. after being kidnapped and jailed in Israel. She, along with other international activists of the Free Gaza Movement had their boat, the “Spirit of Humanity,” hijacked by Israel in international waters during their mission to deliver humanitarian aid to the people in Gaza. Their entire precious cargo of building supplies was confiscated.

There was no response from the U.S. government or any U.S. media coverage on the kidnapping of this former Congressperson, Barron added; just as there’s been a corporate news whiteout of the Viva Palestina convoy. Barron quoted the old baseball phrase “Three strikes and you’re out” in response to McKinney’s third attempt this year to enter Gaza with aid. In her case, Barron said, “Three strikes and you’re in.”

He said that for McKinney getting into Gaza was a personal victory after her previous attempts were thwarted by aggression of the Zionist Israeli navy. Both Barron and McKinney were the chief U.S. negotiators with Egyptian officials during the convoy.



Cynthia McKinney



WW PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD
Charles Barron

Facing obstacles in Egypt; hope in Gaza

Convoy participants reported that they were thwarted and delayed every step of the way by Egyptian police and army personnel for several days. They were shadowed, spied on and forced to provide duplicates of written information they had already provided.

At the Suez Canal’s “Peace Bridge” on their way to Gaza, convoy participants were shouted at, threatened, given orders to turn back, and given five minutes to do so. But they refused and stood their ground. They referred to the incident as a “show-down” and their “Battle of Suez Canal” with the Egyptians that lasted for 12 hours.

In the end, they finally gained entry into Gaza City with two ambulances. But they were not allowed to take in the trucks they had purchased in Egypt for the Palestinians; the Egyptians kept them.

The convoy was greeted with jubilation when it entered Gaza. People had been anxiously awaiting the convoy for days and nights, including the international media. In Egypt and throughout the Arab world the Palestinian issue is a hot topic. At times Gazans feared the worse because of the days of delay.

Convoy participants were impressed and moved by the resilience, passion and conviction of the people of Gaza who, they say, have refused to die, despite U.S.-Israeli genocidal attempts.

What they brought with them to Gaza, convoy participants said, was not only desperately needed aid—but love, compassion, hope and solidarity. And the love they received back from the people was overwhelming.

A video was shown during the meeting that illustrated the stark reality of the destruction in Gaza. The convoy’s minibuses displayed Palestinian and U.S. flags. African Americans carried the red, black and green African Liberation flag—red for blood shed, black for the people, green for the land—it was explained. Palestinians were visibly touched by this support. Barron said, “Iraq has been occupied since 2003; Palestine has been occupied for 60 years.”

One section of the video labeled “Brave little girls” showed children speaking about their experiences. The children asked the same perennial questions that millions of Black children in the U.S. and throughout the African Diaspora ask who’ve been targeted by white supremacists: “Why do they hate us so much? What did we ever do to them?”

Questions from the audience centered on what are the next steps. Barron stated that convoy activists will be taking their report-back all over New York City.

Convoy participants stated Israel’s war is against the Palestinian people, not just against Hamas; that Israel is an illegal, brutal state; that the Palestinian fight for the right to return to their land is related to the fight of Hurricane Katrina survivors’ right to return to New Orleans.

Convoy members summed up their report by stating that it was “Mission Accomplished.” They succeeded, and hope there will be more delegations to Gaza. The report-back ended with shouts of “Free Palestine!” The struggle continues! □

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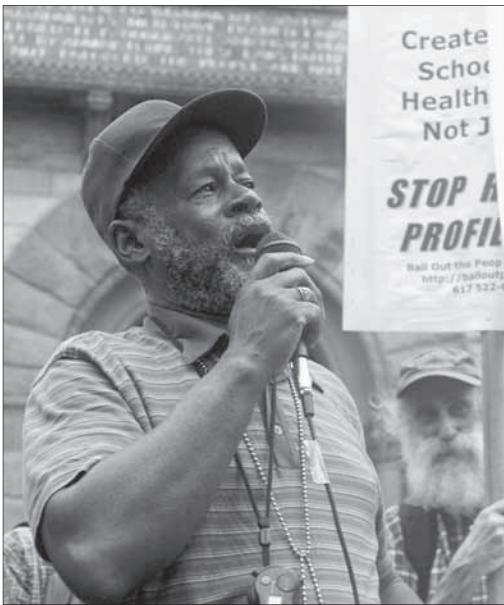
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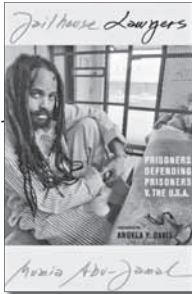
July 29 speakers include Robert Traynham, Steve Gillis, Bishop Filipe Teixeira and Phebe Eckfeldt.

WW PHOTOS: LIZ GREEN

By Mumia Abu-Jamal on death row

The San Francisco 8—No More!

Taken from a July 15 audio column heard at www.prisonradio.org. Go to www.millions4mumia.org to read updates on Mumia's case.



It's been two and a half years since the San Francisco 8—eight former members of the Black Panther Party—were cast into California jails and threatened with life sentences stemming from the 1971 shooting of a cop.

Perhaps the State figured the post-9/11 paranoia and mania would make this an easy case. Perhaps the government thought that because many of the accused were men of advancing age, decades away from their prime organizing and activist days, it would be a cake walk.

The eight men fought with dignity, principle and unity and, several days ago, charges for four of them were dismissed altogether: Ray Boudreaux, Richard Brown, Hank Jones and Harold Taylor.

New York's Jalil Muntaqim pled no contest to conspiracy and got time served in San Francisco County Jail—almost two and a half years—with three years' probation.

Herman Bell—another New York former Panther—took a similar deal earlier in July.

One ex-Panther, Francisco Torres, faces a hearing next month where most observers expect all charges to be dropped. Another, John Bowman, died before trial. The last, Richard O'Neal, was cleared pre-trial.

From the very beginning, back in the 1970s, several of the men were brutally tortured by police in Louisiana to elicit false confessions; thus we see that Abu Ghraib really was nothing new.

The cases were dismissed decades ago on that basis alone.

That the prosecutions were reinstated at all is due more to the politicized Justice Department under John Ashcroft and George Bush—where torture was a tool of state—than anything else. Also implicated? The political ambitions of California Attorney General Jerry Brown seeking the governorship.

No charges should have been brought in the first place—or, if contemplated, dismissed under double jeopardy principles.

As it is, even the state admits, dismissal is valid due to insufficient evidence.

These results are due, in large part, to the solidarity of the men themselves, and some excellent, aggressive lawyering by assorted defense counsel, among them J. Soffiyah Elijah of Harvard Law School.

Several years ago, in a statement calling for support for the San Francisco 8, I implored supporters to fight for them now, before they fell into the clutches of the state containment system, instead of after.

Many took up that fight, leading to many of the most recent results.

Order Mumia's latest book, *"Jailhouse Lawyers,"* at leftbooks.com.

Following Gates arrest

Activists announce campaign against racial profiling

By Frank Neisser
Cambridge, Mass.

A community/labor picket line and news conference were held in front of Cambridge City Hall on July 29 to launch a campaign against racial profiling. Organized by the Bail Out the People Movement, Boston chapter, the actions expressed solidarity with Harvard professor Dr. Henry Louis Gates Jr., whose arrest in his Cambridge house on July 16 has reopened a national debate on police brutality.

Professor Gates has told the mainstream media that he has received death threats and bomb threats from racists, which has forced him to change his email address and phone number. (BBC, Aug. 3)

The demonstration and news conference at City Hall preceded a meeting there on the Gates case by the Cambridge Police Review and Advisory Board.

About 50 people gathered in front of City Hall with placards reading: "Professor Gates was right. Cambridge police must apologize!" Referring to the arresting officer, signs said, "Prosecute Crowley—Racial profiling and false arrest are crimes." Linking this case to broad social issues, they demanded, "Create jobs, schools and healthcare, not jails—Stop racial profiling!" "Stand in solidarity with Prof. Gates—Say no to racism" and "Racism hurts all poor and working people."

The demonstrators called for an independent investigation into the arrest of Professor Gates and racial profiling. The news conference was co-chaired by Phebe Eckfeldt of the Women's Fightback Network. Eckfeldt is also a member of Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers, AFSCME Local 3650, and the Harvard No Layoffs Campaign.

Eckfeldt's co-chair was Catholic Bishop Filipe Teixeira, a member of the Racial

Profile Task Force of Massachusetts. The bishop opened the news conference by citing the many cases of racial profiling in Cambridge that he has dealt with as a Task Force member.

Eckfeldt said: "We are here today to show 100 percent support for Professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. We are multinational residents of Cambridge, Somerville, Boston and beyond. We are trade unionists, church leaders, mothers, fathers, teachers, bus drivers, community activists and youth activists. We are Harvard University students, workers and faculty. We join the hundreds of thousands of people across the country in applauding the courage of Dr. Gates in standing up to the Cambridge police, in standing up to racism and racial profiling."

Steve Gillis, vice president of Steel Workers Local 8751, the Boston School Bus Union, talked about the importance of solidarity and how racism is used to divide workers.

A highlight of the news conference was the appearance of Irene O'Bannon, an African-American Cambridge resident. Her son was racially profiled when a cop pressed a gun right up to his head while holding a photo of a completely different-looking suspect in his other hand. She courageously spoke to the crowd about the incident. Several other African-American Cambridge residents joined the demonstration from the street in response to leafleting and spoke of their experiences.

Frank Neisser of the Bail Out the People Movement announced a national online petition campaign demanding the Cambridge Police Department apologize and calling on the Justice Department to launch an investigation into racial profiling and police brutality nationwide; bring cops guilty of racial profiling to justice; and remove funding from police departments that practice racial profiling

and police brutality.

The petition sends messages to President Barack Obama, Attorney General Eric Holder, the Cambridge mayor, the city manager, the police commissioner and City Council, Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick, leading members of Congress including the Judiciary Committees, and the media. Go to bailoutpeople.org/gates-petition.shtml to sign on.

Following the news conference the demonstrators carried their signs and messages into the meeting of the Cambridge Police Review and Advisory Board.

The board's functions are to hold investigations and hearings on complaints about police misconduct. The board can make recommendations to the city manager about what actions it thinks should be taken on complaints.

Board chairperson Martin Betts announced that the Anti-Violence Project of Massachusetts intended to file a formal complaint with the board about the arrest of Professor Gates. The board also heard from other community residents who have been directly affected by racial profiling.

An older white woman who is a Cambridge resident told the board that she started crying when she heard that it was Officer James Crowley who arrested Gates. She explained that she had been traumatized by Crowley when he threatened to arrest her and lock her up if she did not stop investigating city violations concerning disabled access to streets, walkways and buildings.

Representatives of the Bail Out the People Movement spoke to demand an independent investigation, prosecution of Crowley and action to stop racial profiling.

On the same day as the news conference, it was reported that Boston police officer Justin Barrett had used a racial slur in an email he sent out about Professor Gates to colleagues at the National Guard. He has been suspended. (www.boston.com, July 30) □

NY Forum to discuss

Gates & racial profiling

The New York branch of Workers World Party will be holding a public forum on "Professor Henry Gates was right—Racial profiling and police brutality are wrong", Sat., Aug. 8, 3 p.m. at the Solidarity Center, 55 W. 17th St., Rm. 5C in Manhattan.

The featured speakers will be:

- Phebe Eckfeldt, a member of Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers, AFSCME Local 3650; a founder of the Boston Women's Fightback Network; and a leader of WWP in Boston.

- Monica Moorehead—managing editor of WW newspaper; WWP secretariat

member; and editor of 'Marxism, Reparations & the Black Freedom Struggle' book.

- Larry Hales, a leader of Fight Imperialism, Stand Together; contributing editor of WW newspaper and a WWP national committee member.

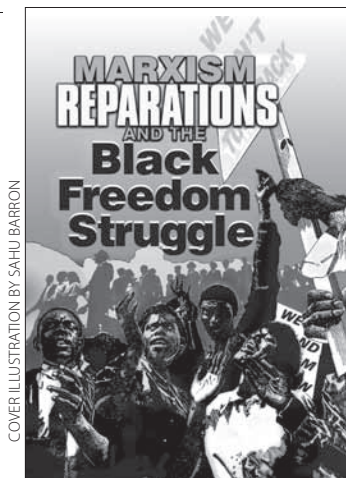
Discussion will follow the presentations.

There will also be a special video showing of the July 29 community-labor press conference in support of Prof. Gates in Cambridge, Mass. Dinner will be served after the forum for a small donation. Call 212-627-2994 for leaflets and more information. □

MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle

An anthology of writings from Workers World newspaper. Edited by Monica Moorehead. Includes:

- Racism, national oppression & self-determination
- Black labor from chattel slavery to wage slavery
- Black youth: repression & resistance
- Black & Brown unity: A pillar of struggle for human rights & global justice!
- Are conditions ripe again today? 40th anniversary of the 1965 Watts Rebellion
- Racism and poverty in the Delta
- The struggle for Socialism is key
- Domestic Workers United demand passage of a bill of rights
- Reparations for Africa & Caribbean



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Sickness & struggle

The urgency of reform

By David Hoskins

The push for meaningful health care reform is in peril. Congressional Democrats have advanced flawed legislation that fails to live up to their campaign pledge of universal health care reform. Republicans allied with right-wing “Blue Dog” Democrats have worked overtime to derail any attempt at reform.

Congress adjourned for the August recess without a floor vote on health reform, leaving many observers to speculate that the plan is doomed to repeat past failed health-reform attempts.

The need for quality universal health reform is more urgent than ever. More than 50 million people living in the U.S. lack basic health insurance. Another 25 million are underinsured.

Families USA, a nonprofit advocacy group for health reform, issued a July report detailing how rising insurance premiums and growing unemployment contribute to an average of 44,230 people losing health coverage each week.

These figures, while important, tell only part of the story. The real-life instances of tragedy resulting from a lack of health insurance tell the other part.

One such story emerged in February 2007 when 12-year-old Deamonte Driver died in Maryland after infection from an abscessed tooth spread to his brain. His mother, Alyce Driver, had spent a considerable amount of time prior to his death trying to find dental care for her children. Deamonte died after weeks of emergency hospitalization failed to save his young life.

Although Alyce Driver was a working mother, none of her jobs in a bakery, construction or home health care provided insurance for her family. Her son’s story adds to the picture of a health care system in crisis and reveals the backdrop to the biggest struggle for health care reform in 16 years.

Not since the 1993 Clinton health reform fiasco has there been such widespread popular support for a radical overhaul of the health care system. Labor unions, progressive health care professionals and consumer advocacy groups all agree that the current system is untenable.

Many among these sections of the organized left have also concluded that the current Democratic reform plan is woefully inadequate and prone to failure.

President Barack Obama’s former doctor recently came out against the Democratic health plan, according to a July 29 article on the Huffington Post. Dr. David Scheiner, a single-payer advocate who treated President Obama for 20 years, says: “I look at his program and I can’t see how it’s going to work. There would be no effective cost control in his program. The [Congressional Budget Office] said it’s going to be incredibly expensive ... and the thing that I really am worried about is, if it is the failure that I think it would be, then health reform will be set back a long, long time.”

This certainly would not mark the first time health reform has suffered a severe setback. An examination of the struggle for reform throughout U.S. history reveals an uphill battle with many major defeats for the movement and some modest concessions from the state.

Medicare, Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program rank among the most significant health care gains won by workers and oppressed people. But despite a century of struggle, workers in the United States have yet to win a system of quality, universal health care for all. Access to adequate care is now considered a basic right in every other industrialized capitalist country.

As the current push for reform teeters on the brink of collapse, the movement must grapple with a new set of questions.

Why have past attempts at systemic reform failed? How did the modest reforms in health care, such as Medicare and Medicaid, come about? What is the impact of the scientific-technological revolution on health care delivery and patient access? And last but certainly not least—how can quality universal health care coverage be won?

President Obama often referred to “the fierce urgency of now”—a phrase first popularized by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.—to appeal to voters during the presidential election. A fierce urgency of now exists when it comes to the radical changes needed in the health care system.

The U.S. spends far more on health insurance than other countries, according to a 2009 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development report on comparative health data. U.S. health care expenditures account for 16 percent of gross domestic product. France came in second on this measure with health spending equal to 11 percent of GDP.

The OECD average was just under 9 percent. U.S. per capita spending of \$7,290 was almost two-and-a-half times greater than the OECD average of \$2,964. The OECD has 30 member countries, including all of Western Europe, Canada, the U.S., Japan, south Korea, Australia and four countries from Eastern Europe.

This same report found that, despite exorbitant costs, the U.S. has fewer physicians and hospital beds per capita, a higher infant mortality rate, and a lower life expectancy than most other OECD countries.

A 2008 study published in Health Affairs Journal found that the U.S. had the highest rate of preventable deaths before the age of 75 out of the 19 countries it examined. The study concluded that as many as 101,000 deaths a year could be prevented by ensuring that all patients receive quality care in a timely manner.

In this time of severe economic crisis capitalism might be sick, but it is the workers who are dying.

Next: Cold War politics pushed Truman on health reform.

PART 1

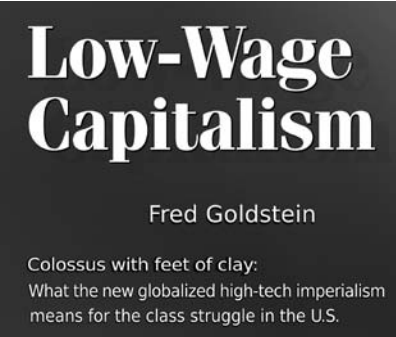
Low-Wage Capitalism

What the new globalized high-tech imperialism means for the class struggle in the U.S.

A timely new book by Fred Goldstein describes in sweeping detail the drastic effect on the working class of new technology and the restructuring of global capitalism in the post-Soviet era. It uses Karl Marx’s law of wages and other findings to show that these developments are not only continuing to drive down wages but are creating the material basis for future social upheaval, the end of working-class compromise and retreat and must end up in a profound revival of the struggle against capital. The analysis rests on three basic developments in the last three decades:

- The world’s workforce available to exploitation by transnational capitalist corporations doubled in the wake of the collapse of the USSR and Eastern Europe.
- The technological revolutions of the digital age, in both production and communications, have allowed transnational corporations to destroy high-wage jobs and simultaneously expand the global workforce to generate a worldwide wage competition.
- The decline in the economic condition of the workers, driven by the laws of capitalism and the capitalist class, is leading to the end of working-class compromise and retreat and must end up in a profound revival of the struggle against capital.

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“We need to get this book into the hands of every worker. It clearly explains the capitalist economic threat to our jobs, our pensions and our homes. But, even more importantly, it shows us how we can fight back and win!”

– David Sole, President
UAW Local 2334,
Detroit, Michigan

On The Picketline

By Sue Davis

Celebrate year of struggle at Stella D’Oro!

The workers at Stella D’Oro will mark one year since they walked off the job against unfair concessions and launched what has become a focus of struggle throughout the labor movement in New York City and beyond. Supporters from community and labor activists are coming out to rally with them on Saturday, Aug. 15, from 12 noon to 2 p.m. at 237th Street & Broadway. The message to the financiers at Brynwood Partners that we are united behind the workers at Stella D’Oro and will not rest until their jobs — good union jobs — have been secured.

The message to Brynwood — and to any potential buyers who would relocate production — is simple: “Keep Stella D’Oro in the Bronx: No layoffs, no concessions, no closure!” (From a message from the Stella D’Oro Solidarity Committee.)

Farm Workers demand heat safety

The Farm Workers union sued the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health on July 30 because it’s not obeying the law. Regulations were passed in 2005 aimed at stopping deaths from heat illness of farm workers, who are overwhelmingly Latinas/os. Farm workers often work in heat exceeding 100 degrees. But 11 farm workers have died since the 2005 law was enacted; six of the deaths came in 2008. The union says the regulations are too weak and DOSH is not investigating enough farms. Last year, DOSH found that more than 35 percent of growers it investigated violated the regulations. Since a heat wave started July 11 this year, DOSH has conducted 167 inspections and found more than 200 violations. While several workers have been taken to the hospital, no one has died this year—yet. The union’s lawsuit contends that the regulations must be changed because they place a burden on the workers. “It’s extremely difficult for workers to step forward, especially because they often work at piece rates, and they’re not paid when they take a break,” Catherine Lhamon, assistant legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California, told the July 31 New York Times.

Latina/o worker deaths up 76 percent since 1992

No wonder the Farm Workers are outraged! The number of Latina/o workers who died on the job has risen by 76 percent, even as the overall number of workplace deaths has declined, reports the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The latest tally shows an increase in Latina/o deaths on the job from 533 in 1992 to 937 in 2007. Meanwhile, total fatalities in all jobs nationwide fell from 6,217 to 5,657. The record in Latina/o deaths on the job was 990 in 2006. The most were in construction, transportation and warehousing, natural resources, mining and farming. There are more Latina/o workers in the labor force today, rising from 10.4 percent in 1998 to 14 percent in 2007, notes Peg Seminario, AFL-CIO safety and health director. She says lack of training, employers failing to communicate with workers in Spanish or to provide Spanish-language safety instructions, and exploitation of workers lead to accidents and deaths.

CIW targets Chipotle

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers has been waging a campaign since 2001 to get fast-food chains to pay a penny a bushel more for Florida tomatoes. That’s needed to help end sub-poverty wages and put pressure on growers to end back-breaking labor and vicious exploitation in the fields of mostly Latina/o and African-American workers. An impressive list of chains, including Taco Bell, McDonald’s, Burger King and Subway, has signed on. Now CIW is focusing on the Chipotle restaurant chain. While Chipotle has been sponsoring screenings of the new documentary “Food, Inc.,” which shows injustices in the food system, CIW activists have been demonstrating outside to expose Chipotle’s hypocrisy. To support this campaign, sign the petition posted on the Action Center at www.americanrightsatworks.org. And boycott Chipotle while you’re at it!

Minimum wage raised—not enough!

On July 17 the minimum wage crept up to \$7.25. Even the July 18 New York Times reported it “is still no higher now, after inflation, than it was in the early 1980s, and it is 17 percent lower than its peak in 1968.” In her article posted on ZNet on July 24, Holly Sklar writes: “In today’s dollars, the 1968 hourly minimum wage adds up to \$20,634 a year working full time. The new federal minimum wage of \$7.25 comes to just \$15,080. That’s \$5,554 in lost wages.” She also points out, “It would take \$9.92 today to match the buying power of the minimum wage at its peak in 1968.” When we demand jobs for all, we also need to demand the minimum wage be at least \$10 an hour! □

After exiting bankruptcy

Delphi parts destroys pensions, cuts wages

By Martha Grevatt

On July 31 Judge Robert Drain of the U.S. Bankruptcy Court in New York approved a plan for Delphi to emerge from bankruptcy by the end of August. Delphi is the former parts division of General Motors that was spun off as a separate entity in 1999. The judge's ruling comes nearly four years after Delphi introduced the pattern of contract busting through bankruptcy to the auto industry.

Delphi sought protection from creditors under a Chapter 11 bankruptcy filing on Oct. 8, 2005. CEO Robert "Steve" Miller quickly earned the enmity of union workers by demanding they agree to a 65-percent pay cut and by gutting their entire contract; over 20 plants were to be closed. All Miller wanted untouched was the no-strike pledge and the management's right clause.

Needless to say, the workers voted no on Miller's initial proposals. Rank-and-file resistance emerged, choosing the name Soldiers of Solidarity. SOS held meetings and demonstrations and waged an in-plant "work-to-rule" slowdown campaign.

However, Delphi—in collusion with GM— was leading the push to drive down wages and eliminate jobs in the auto industry, particularly the parts sector. "We're just the warm-up act," Miller stated on several occasions. (Detroit News, July 31)

Unfortunately, the leadership of the United Auto Workers then negotiated a plan for Delphi to offer lump-sum buy-out payments to entice workers to quit or retire, with GM providing the financing. In 2004 the UAW had already reopened the 2003-2007 contract and agreed to let Delphi pay new hires half of what hourly production workers were then earning.

By the summer of 2007, with the workforce reduced from 50,000 to 17,000 in less than two years, the majority of Delphi's unionized workers were making the bottom-tier wage of \$14 an hour. This divide-and-conquer tactic led to easy passage of a contract that gave the newer workers a raise but cut the wages of higher seniority workers by \$10 an hour.

The stage was set for Chrysler, Ford and GM—the "headliners" for which Delphi had been the "warm-up act"—to squeeze major contract concessions from UAW members later in 2007. This year Chrysler and GM, like Delphi, used Chapter 11 bankruptcy to their advantage. Fearing for their jobs, workers gave up raises, bonuses, overtime pay, relief time and even the right to strike for the next six years.

The bosses at GM still needed to complete the reorganization at what remained of Delphi. Not much was left; all but nine plants had been shuttered. A plan for GM

to take back four U.S. components plants and the steering division, with the Wall Street firm Platinum Equity buying Delphi's four remaining plants, was rejected by Delphi's creditors. Now Judge Drain has approved GM's acquisition of the five plants it wants back, but the rest of the business will go to Elliott Management, Silver Point Capital, Monarch Alternative Capital and other hedge funds in exchange for the \$3.5 billion Delphi owes them.

Workers sacrificed on altar of profit

What is significant from a working-class standpoint, however, is not whether this or that private investor assumes Delphi's shrunk assets. After the Platinum sale was dropped, Judge Drain overruled objections from retirees and allowed Delphi to dump its pension obligations onto the government's Pension Benefit Guarantee Corp. This means that retirees, especially those who retired young after 30 years of service, will have their monthly Delphi pension check drastically reduced and will lose health and life insurance benefits altogether.

GM is, at least for now, bound by an agreement with the UAW to make up the difference between what its retirees were collecting from Delphi and what the PBGC pays. Other retirees—not only non-union salaried retirees but members of the Electrical Workers, Communication Workers and other unions—will get no assistance from GM.

What is GM getting out of all this? GM will have two new, wholly owned subsidiaries. GM Components Holdings LLC will include Delphi Thermal Systems in Lockport, N.Y.; Delphi Powertrain in Rochester, N.Y.; Delphi Powertrain Systems in Grand Rapids, Mich.; and Delphi Electronics and Safety in Kokomo, Ind.

GM Global Steering Holdings LLC will be comprised of Delphi Steering in Saginaw, Mich., the global headquarters and manufacturing operations for steering products, along with engineering and locations in Mexico, Brazil, Europe, India, China and Australia. Delphi Steering has more than 60 customers worldwide, including Renault, Volkswagen, Ford, Fiat, Hyundai Mahindra, Tata and almost a dozen Chinese vehicle manufacturers.

GM is in the process of reducing its U.S. workforce by 20,000 through more buyouts and by closing 14 plants. The sudden plunge in vehicle sales, however, has meant that GM is not hiring, and therefore not benefiting from the low entry-level wage of \$14 an hour the UAW agreed to in 2007. But as Delphi workers become GM employees—some for the second time—they will be bound by the Delphi contract. Thus GM will gain 7,000

new, lower-paid workers.

What are the hedge funds getting for \$3.5 billion? A lot more than four U.S. plants. These vulture capitalists will acquire Delphi's overseas operations, consisting of around 140 facilities employing 104,000 workers around the world.

This is not the final chapter in the brutal auto restructuring in which workers and retirees are being sacrificed on the altar of profitability. Visteon, which Ford spun off around the same time that GM spun off Delphi, filed for bankruptcy May 28, and has asked the court for permission to eliminate health and life insurance for all its 4,480 retirees.

In January 2006, as the Delphi scenario was beginning and United Airlines bankruptcy was ending with the union pension plan gutted, the New York Times ran a story titled "Gee, Bankruptcy Never Looked So Good." For autoworkers of this writer's generation, capitalism has never looked so bad. Now is the time to be part of a global workers' movement that is telling the bosses: "Don't solve your crisis on our backs."

Martha Grevatt has worked at the Chrysler stamping plant in Twinsburg, Ohio, for 22 years and is an active member of UAW Local 122. E-mail mgrevatt@workers.org.

Protest targets Philippine pres.



Filipino students and others demonstrated in front of the new Federal Building on 7th Street in San Francisco on July 27 to demand no U.S. tax money for the tortures carried out under the dictatorship of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, justice for Melissa Roxas, and more money for education, jobs and healthcare for all in the United States. Participants from all over the San Francisco Bay Area included Bayan-USA, Gabriela-USA, Anakbayan-East Bay, and the San Francisco chapters of the Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines and the League of Filipino Students. The next activity is remembering and demanding justice for all the victims of the Arroyo administration on the International Day of the Disappeared, Sunday, Aug. 30, in the Koret Auditorium, San Francisco Public Library. A similar demonstration took place on July 31 at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York where Arroyo was staying on her visit to the U.S.

—Report and photo by Joan Marquardt

Solidarity with Korean workers



A meeting of the San Francisco Labor Council on July 27 unanimously adopted a resolution to support striking workers in South Korea. It endorsed a call by the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions for solidarity actions in support of striking auto and media workers and public school teachers. The next afternoon, July 28, members of the SFLC and community activists demonstrated outside the South Korean Consulate in a solidarity picket initiated by the Transport Workers Solidarity Committee.

—Report and photo by Joan Marquardt

WW articles on the BIG CRASH

New publication! What is behind the devastating onslaught on workers' jobs and homes? This compilation of articles from Workers World, beginning in 2006, analyzes the developing worldwide economic crisis and provides strategies for a fight-back movement against the corporations and banks.

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 - What could be done with \$10 trillion

Mellons over Pittsburgh and the planet

By Stephen Millies

The Rockefeller and Du Pont billionaire dynasties are hated around the world. Outside of Pennsylvania the super rich Mellon family isn't as well known. They should be. When *Fortune* magazine listed the eight richest people in the United States in 1957, four of them were Mellons. The family's crown jewels then included Alcoa Aluminum, Gulf Oil—which merged with Rockefeller's Chevron in 1984—and the Mellon National Bank. Alcoa had sales of nearly \$27 billion in 2008. Chevron was ten times bigger with sales of \$273 billion. In 2007 the Mellon Bank merged with the Bank of New York to form a financial octopus that operates in 34 countries. Bank of New York vice president Lucy Edwards admitted conspiring to launder more than \$7 billion from Russia. (Bloomberg News, July 26, 2006) The Bank of New York Mellon has \$20.7 trillion in assets under custody or administration. That's \$6 trillion more than the entire gross domestic product of the United States. Yet it still received a bailout of \$3 billion while it was supposed to "oversee" the Troubled Assets Relief Program. Much of the Mellon wealth is locked up in tax-dodging foundations. The Andrew W. Mellon foundation had \$6.5 billion in assets in 2007. Political power went along with this loot. George Bush made Paul O'Neill—the

former CEO of Mellon-controlled Alcoa—his first treasury secretary in 2001. Eighty years earlier, Andrew Mellon had to resign from 51 corporation boards when he became treasury secretary in 1921. Presidents Harding, Coolidge and Hoover took orders from the financier. Mellon's reign—the longest of any treasury secretary—extended the misery of the Great Depression. According to Herbert Hoover's memoirs, Andrew Mellon's attitude was to "liquidate labor, liquidate stocks, liquidate the farmers." "Liquidate labor" is exactly what happened to Pittsburgh where the Mellon fortune originated. Pittsburgh finally recovered from the Depression. But in the early 1980s the area lost 56,000 steel industry jobs and 54,000 other manufacturing jobs. (Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel, May 16.) Deindustrialization has led to 21 percent of Pittsburgh's total population and a third of its African Americans living under the poverty line. Pittsburgh is where the G-20 summit is being held in September. **A bigoted miser** Founder of the family fortune was Thomas A. Mellon, an immigrant from Ulster who was born in 1813. He took great pride that his ancestors had crossed over from Scotland to Ulster after Oliver Cromwell slaughtered the local Irish population. Mellon wrote in his autobiography, "It is very manifest that it would have been well for Ireland had this policy of extirpa-

tion been carried into effect throughout the entire island." This bigot became a lawyer and a loan shark. Mellon lent money at high interest rates and foreclosed on those who couldn't pay up. He started a real estate empire that benefited from Pittsburgh becoming the steel capital. By 1860 Thomas Mellon got himself elected judge. Later he wrote that there was nothing wrong with condemned prisoners committing suicide: "This growing tendency of self-destruction ... is not to be discouraged." The same year Mellon became a hanging judge Abraham Lincoln was elected president. Over 360,000 Pennsylvanians joined the Union Army to fight the slave masters. Pennsylvania Congressperson Thaddeus Stevens demanded land and freedom for Black people. Even James Mellon, Thomas Mellon's second son, wanted to enlist. Judge Mellon was furious. "It is only greenhorns who enlist," wrote the father to his son. "There are plenty of other lives less valuable." It is "less valuable" workers who continue to fill Veterans Administration hospitals and military cemeteries. **The Mellon fortune takes off** As soon as his judgeship ended, Thomas Mellon opened a private bank on Jan. 2, 1870, on Smithfield Street. "T. Mellon & Sons' Bank" had to close its doors during the 1873 crisis but reopened in a few months.

It was Thomas's son Andrew who really sent the Mellon fortune into orbit. Daddy Mellon was already financing Henry Clay Frick and swindling farmers out of their land that lay over valuable coal deposits. Like Wall Street's J.P. Morgan, who started General Electric and U.S. Steel, Andrew Mellon began organizing corporations. Charles Martin Hall discovered how to separate alumina from bauxite rock at the same time French inventor Paul Heroult did so. Joining forces with metallurgist Alfred E. Hunt, they turned to the Mellon Bank seeking money to exploit Hall's invention. In 1888 the Mellons financed the Pittsburgh Reduction Company—now called Alcoa—keeping 40 percent of the stock for themselves. Hall's U.S. patent—not recognized in Europe—and high tariffs gave Alcoa an absolute monopoly on aluminum in the United States until World War II. But oil provided even more profits than aluminum. The Mellons were able to take over the fabulous Spindletop oilfield in Texas to form Gulf Oil. After Andrew Mellon left the Treasury, he became U.S. ambassador to Britain. He demanded and got 50 percent of any oil found in Kuwait, which was then a British colony. Sixty years later U.S. imperialism went to war with Iraq to protect Gulf Oil's stake in Kuwait. *Next: "You can't operate a coal mine without machine guns."*

California: Make corporations pay!

Continued from page 1

their funding taken by the state, supposedly to be paid back later. Not only will this force local governments to make further infrastructure and social service cuts, it makes balancing the budget next year and in the future even more difficult, thus leading to even deeper cuts going forward. This is also true with regard to cutbacks in children's health care programs. Even the politicians realize this saves nothing. Alberto Torrico, State Assembly majority leader, says: "The governor's budget calls for taking one million kids off the healthy families program. That's just foolish because those kids will end up in the emergency room, which will cost local government millions while the state loses the three or four dollars for every dollar we spend in federal matching funds."

Unions protest wage cuts

The attack on workers' wages is pushing the unions into a fight with legislators. A posting on the Web site of California Service Employees Local 1021 says: "Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and his band of loyal lawmakers proved they're [decisive] with the budget cuts by taking healthcare from the sick and frail and every kind of care from the elderly; by closing schools so kids have nowhere to learn, and after-school programs so they have nowhere else to go. They closed the deficit by privatizing public services and throwing public servants under the bus, while taking money with impudence from those who remain. And if you thought these outcomes were shocking, here's the most shocking thing of all: California lawmakers managed all of this without taxing corporations one single additional dime." (www.seiu1021.org)

Why not tax Big Oil, banks?

Given that these cuts are so devastating and actually will make it more difficult to balance future budgets, why would the legislators ignore alternatives, like taxing the oil companies or going after the bailed-out banks? State Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg, a Democrat, said their options were limited because they wanted to avoid new taxes without destroying the state's social safety net. Obviously, the Legislature's priority was avoiding new taxes on the rich. They did that, but they ripped up the safety net. Why avoid the obvious source of revenue? Last year Exxon Mobil made record profits of more than \$45 billion. Chevron made \$24 billion. However, unlike all other oil-producing states in the U.S., California does not collect a severance tax on crude oil extractions made there. According to the California Tax Reform Association, "California has the lowest total taxes on oil in the country by a substantial margin." One study put the state's 2008 effective corporate oil tax rate at only 3 percent. (www.caltaxreform.org) California is the third-largest producer of crude oil in the country. According to the state's Energy Commission, the 240 million barrels extracted from the state annually could bring in \$1 billion to \$2 billion if it were taxed at 6 percent—a rate proposed in Proposition 87 in 2006. (Big Oil defeated it.) Alternatively, if the state used the same extraction tax rate used by "anti-taxation" former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin beginning in 2007, it would bring in \$4 billion to \$8 billion a year, depending on crude oil prices, which have fluctuated between \$70 and \$130 a barrel.

However, why stop there? Why not tax oil companies the way workers are taxed? Workers lose more than 30 percent of their wages in taxes, on average. This alone would generate much more than what is needed to cover the education cutbacks from grades K-12. Like the yacht tax, which could have been a part of the budget, why wasn't an oil severance or extraction tax included? Money talks. Exxon Mobil Corporation spent \$150 million to defeat a severance taxation bill and also contributed heavily to candidates in California in 2007. However, taxing oil companies is not the only solution that could have been tapped. According to some estimates, even without any new loans, in three years the state will spend a record 6.1 percent of its budget just to service the debt it already has. Imagine how that equation would change if California could deduct from

the interest it pays banks the money it has already paid out to them in bailouts. This would take a political fight, but the governor's rationale in passing these budget cuts was that California is in a state of emergency. Why should that justify taking the property, livelihood and very lives of the workers, while not touching the bosses? **Organize community-labor alliance** The union movement waged a campaign to fight these cuts. Unions organized protests from Los Angeles to Sacramento. However, a community/labor alliance must be organized to meet this unprecedented assault and expose further this blatant betrayal by elected officials, whether Republican or Democrat. California labor/community participation in the G-20 jobs summit in Pittsburgh on September 20-26 could be a big part of building that fightback. □

Help to publish: 'High

World View Forum is reissuing "High Tech, Low Pay," the classic by Workers World Party founder Sam Marcy, on the party's 50th anniversary. The first edition, published in 1986, soon sold out due to demand from workers and activists around the country. Now, requests for the book are increasing as the economic crisis worsens. The book rings as true today as when it was first published. It showed how the scientific-technological revolution, at that time in an earlier phase of capitalist restructuring, was destroying high-paying jobs and at the same time changing

the social composition of the working class. Its reissue is very timely. Capitalism is in its biggest crisis since the Great Depression. High tech has spread globally to the detriment of the world's workers. However, as Marcy explained, the high-tech revolution has brought more of the oppressed into the plants, hospitals and offices, raising the potential for greater solidarity and struggle. A new 28-page introduction by Fred Goldstein, author of "Low-Wage Capitalism: Colossus with Feet of Clay," takes up how world developments since "High Tech" was written have only added to the need for a working-class resurgence.

From new intro to ‘High Tech, Low Pay’

How changes in capitalist cycle have impacted workers

Following are excerpts from a new introduction to the book “High Tech, Low Pay.” This ground-breaking work by Sam Marcy, written in 1986 during the early stages of capitalist restructuring, has long been out of print but will soon be reissued. Fred Goldstein, author of “Low-Wage Capitalism: Colossus with Feet of Clay,” wrote the introduction for the new book.

The workers & the business cycle

One of Marcy’s concerns was to show how the capitalist business cycle put limits upon what the workers could get and what they would have to give up, so long as they accepted the traditional capital-labor relationship. This problem becomes extremely aggravated during the downturn part of the cycle or the “bust” part of the boom-and-bust, which he took up in Chapter 3.

When Marcy wrote this book, the working class had recently lived through the sharp recession of 1980-1982. Official unemployment reached a post-World War II high of 11 percent. The bosses used the recession to demand concessions and carry out restructuring. The unions were thrust onto the defensive. During a downturn, the bosses shrink production and there is high unemployment. Marcy showed that, at such times, if the labor leadership simply confines itself to bargaining for wages and conditions, concessions must necessarily follow. He wanted to signal to the more advanced workers in the labor movement that the next time the cycle turned down again, new strategies would be required to combat the bosses’ offensive.

Marcy’s concern has an urgent relevance in the midst of the current global capitalist crisis, when workers are on the defensive because of the severe rise in unemployment. But it is also timely in a deeper sense because, since he wrote, the capitalist business cycle has changed in general, making the situation even worse as far as the workers are concerned. The “boom” has weakened and the “bust” has dragged on and deepened.

Traditionally, during a capitalist boom the workers can regain some of the positions they lost during the previous bust phase. The bosses, in the race to take advantage of new profit opportunities presented by the capitalist revival, are in great need of expanding their workforce. The reserve army of unemployed contracts sharply. This reduces the competition among the workers, puts them in a stronger bargaining position, and leads to high-

er wages. At the same time it also leads to much higher profits for the bosses.

The era of ‘jobless recoveries’

As the scientific-technological revolution was progressing “at breakneck speed,” as Marcy put it, there occurred a change in the historic pattern of the business cycle. After the recession of 1990-1991, U.S. capitalism entered the era of “jobless recoveries.” For the first time, employment either continued to decline or remained flat long after the economy began to recover. Jobs were either being lost or remained flat for 18 months after the start of the economic upturn. Prior to that time, there had been a typical lag of one quarter, or three months, between the start of economic expansion and job recovery.

The divergence between economic growth and joblessness caused concern among bourgeois economists for a while. However, after the 1990-1991 recession came the collapse of the USSR and Eastern Europe. There followed a surge in investment abroad, a technology boom at home, and the longest period of economic expansion in U.S. history.

The economists promptly forgot about the jobless recovery of 1991-92. They declared the arrival of the “new economy” and the “end of history,” speculating about the end of the business cycle.

The hopes were that, after 75 years of being constrained by socialist revolution and national liberation struggles, the collapse of the material center of the socialist camp would somehow allow infinite expansion and enable the capitalists to overcome the inner contradictions of their system. But as Karl Marx wrote: “The real barrier of capitalist production is capital itself.” (“Capital,” Vol. 3)

The hopes of the bourgeoisie came crashing down in 2000 with the collapse of the technology bubble and the loss of jobs along with \$5 trillion in paper wealth. The vast expansion of capital to every corner of the globe could not eradicate the contradictions inherent in the profit system. It took a speculative boom in technology, with hundreds of companies being created every week, to pump up the economy even with the overseas expansion. The capitalist downturn followed the boom, just as it had since 1825 when the first global downturn took place.

More important than the downturn itself was the nature of the second “jobless recovery” that followed. It turned out

that the jobless recovery of 1991- 1992 had not been an anomaly but an ominous harbinger of things to come. During the first 27 months of the next recovery, from November 2001 to March 2004, there was a **net loss of 594,000 jobs**. It took more than five years for the job level to reach the point at which it had been before the downturn began. According to Stephen Roach, the chief economist of Morgan Stanley at the time, job growth by 2004 was 8 million less than growth in a “normal” recovery.

It is no accident that Marcy focused on the business cycle and its consequences for the workers. The question of the business cycle has been of great concern to the working class since Marx first subjected it to scientific analysis. The boom-and-bust cycle is an essential expression of the fundamental contradiction of the capitalist system. Historically, it has brought both opportunity for struggle as well as shock and disaster to the workers. Understanding it is key to preparing for the class struggle. Studying changes in the boom-and-bust cycle can reveal important underlying features of the evolution of capitalism that the workers need to be aware of.

Marx & Engels on the business cycle

As far back as 1847, in “Wage Labor and Capital,” Marx discussed the question of the workers and the business cycle. Referring to the upside or boom part of the cycle, the period of rapid growth in profits and capitalist accumulation, Marx wrote:

“Even the most favorable situation for the working class, the most rapid possible growth of capital, however much it may improve the material existence of the worker, does not remove the antagonism between his interests and the interests of the bourgeoisie, the interests of the capitalists. Profit and wages remain as before in inverse proportion.

“If capital is growing rapidly, wages may rise; the profit of capital rises incomparably more rapidly. The material position of the worker has improved, but at the cost of his social position. The social gulf that divides him from the capitalist has widened.

“Finally:
“To say that the most favorable condition for wage labor is the most rapid possible growth of productive capital is only to say that the more rapidly the working class increases and enlarges the

power that is hostile to it, the more favorable will be the conditions under which it is allowed to labor anew at increasing bourgeois wealth, at enlarging the power of capital, content with **forging for itself the golden chains by which the bourgeoisie drags it in its train.**” [Emphasis added—Goldstein.]

Engels gave the classic description of the capitalist boom-and-bust cycle in his work “Socialism, Utopian and Scientific,” published in 1880.

“As a matter of fact, since 1825, when the first general crisis broke out, the whole industrial and commercial world ... [is] thrown out of joint once every ten years. Commerce is at a standstill, the markets are glutted, products accumulate, as multitudinous as they are unsalable, hard cash disappears, credit vanishes, factories are closed, the mass of the workers are in want of the means of subsistence, because they have produced too much of the means of subsistence; bankruptcy follows upon bankruptcy.... The stagnation lasts for years; productive forces and products are wasted and destroyed wholesale, until the accumulated mass of commodities finally filters off ... until production and exchange gradually begin to move again. Little by little the pace quickens. It becomes a trot. The industrial trot breaks into a canter, the canter in turn grows into the headlong gallop of a perfect steeplechase of industry, commercial credit, and speculation which finally, after breakneck leaps, ends up where it began—in the ditch of crisis. And over and over again.”

Thus it was Marx who gave a description of the situation of the workers as regards the capitalist business cycle of the time. The period of “rapid accumulation,” that is, the period of the vigorous boom of business following a downturn, has been the most favorable historically for the working class. And it was Engels who described how capitalism goes from crisis to boom to crisis, continuing in that cycle “over and over.”

Even before the 1990s the capitalist business cycle, described a century earlier by Engels, had changed in favor of capital. Marcy, in Chapter 3, focuses on the fact that capitalist recession lengthened in the post-World War II period and that “this is very important in relation to strike strategy, which had a lot to do with the duration of the capitalist economic crisis.” It raises the question of what workers can do if a recession turns out to be protracted and the bosses can hold out for a long time.

To be continued.

Tech, Low Pay’

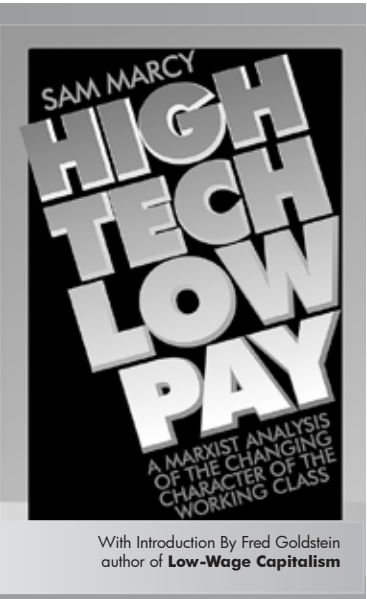
Marcy’s analysis, strategies and tactics are still on-target. His call for a class-wide offensive needs serious consideration. The potential for fightback Marcy projected is exemplified by the mainly immigrant workers at the Republic Windows & Doors factory in Chicago who this year occupied their plant to win their demands.

Here is where our readers come in: Funds are needed to republish this ground-breaking book. While the writing, editing, proofreading, graphics and artwork are all done by voluntary labor, the printing, binding and promotional costs are high.

This new edition of “High Tech, Low Pay” needs to reach working people, activists and readers nationwide. There must be publicity and promotion before it can get into union halls, campuses, libraries and bookstores.

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Now reporting to U.S. movement

Voices of resistance to Honduras coup

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

Honduran workers and farmers have protested every day since a military coup d'état overthrew that country's democratically elected President Manuel Zelaya on June 28. Voices of that resistance movement spoke in Philadelphia July 31 stressing the urgency that Zelaya be returned to power and the coup d'état overturned.

Several of the speakers expressed hope of reversing the coup, noting that despite the pepper spray and the killings, this is the first time they are seeing such a level of unity and determination to resist by the Honduran people.

Sponsored by the National Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Communities, the delegation of human rights activists first stopped in Washington, D.C., to lobby U.S. government representatives to immediately suspend all military and financial aid to the military junta led by Roberto Micheletti.

Oscar Chacon, Executive Director of NALACC, stressed that the Honduran crisis is a top priority for the solidarity movement, noting the danger that this coup d'état serves as a green light for military actions in other countries if not stopped soon.

Berta Joubert-Ceci, who has written

extensively in Workers World about the situation in Honduras, chaired the meeting, which was co-sponsored by the Philadelphia International Action Center, Prometheus Radio Project, and Anarchist/Autonomous People of Color Philly.

Internationally known Honduran medical doctor and human rights activist Dr. Juan Almendares laid blame for the coup d'état on the military forces trained by the U.S. at the School of the Americas and



PHOTO: KELLY VALDEZ

Honduran delegation and supporters in Philadelphia on July 31. From left, Patricia Montes from Boston, Abencio Fernández Pineda, Dr. Juan Almendares, María Luisa Jiménez, Berta Joubert-Ceci from Philadelphia, Oscar Chacón from Chicago, Bartolomea Leduc, Dr. Luther Castillo and others. The group is in the U.S. to explain the resistance to the coup in Honduras.

supported by the U.S. government's continued refusal to suspend all aid.

Almendares noted that former U.S. Ambassador to Honduras John Negroponte visited Honduras in early June and held talks with forces involved in the coup d'état, including business leaders, church hierarchy and the military.

Almendares criticized the U.S. media for building up support for the coup d'état by failing to report that broad sectors of the Honduran population had supported Zelaya's call for changes in the constitution, which historically discriminated against women, Indigenous and Afro-Hondurans.

In 2001 Almendares received the Barbara Chester Award for his groundbreaking efforts with prisoners, victims of torture, the poor and Indigenous populations. A torture survivor himself, Almendares has been targeted by death squads.

Dr. Luther Castillo, named Honduran Doctor of the Year by Rotary International's Tegucigalpa chapter, described the coup d'état's negative impact on Indigenous people and on the Afro-Honduran Garifuna population along the Atlantic coast from which he comes.

Trained at the Latin American School of Medicine in Cuba, Castillo led the construction of Honduras' first Garifuna rural hospital that has served over 20,000 people. He spoke of the resistance to efforts by the coup d'état to close the hospi-

tal and an attack on protesters that resulted in the murder of a young teacher who was shot in the head by the military.

The Garifuna, who comprise 15 percent of the population of Honduras, are descendents of Africans brought to the area on slave ships 212 years ago. Their ancestors were never enslaved because they killed the slave masters. This spirit of resistance continues today with the Garifuna's fight against assimilation and now the coup d'état.

Independent journalist and a member of Honduran grass-roots organization Los Necios, youth activist Gerardo Torres described how poor and working people in Honduras have benefited from changes made by Zelaya, who increased the minimum wage and stopped the privatization of water and electricity.

"The same people who accused Zelaya of trying to stay in power were members of the Supreme Court who have been in power 29 years," Torres said. "The coup d'état in Honduras is an example for other countries and it's key to U.S. interests. If the U.S. took support from the coup d'état [leaders], they couldn't last a week."

Abencio Fernandez Pineda, coordinator of the nongovernmental Center for the Investigation and Defense of Human Rights in Honduras, described the growing problem of death threats against people opposing Micheletti. "People are being assassinated, including a journalist killed because of his reporting, and there are five cases of people who are disappeared," Pineda noted.

Pineda also explained that the curfew imposed by the military junta is being used as an excuse to arrest people who oppose the coup d'état. "Everything is done in the name of 'security.' Fifty-four people were arrested at protests today, including women and children."

Maria Luisa Jimenez, a former police officer who has denounced corruption, spoke from firsthand knowledge of what the military is capable of doing against the people who oppose the coup d'état. She described police and military checkpoints that have been placed throughout the country. "There are paramilitary death squads killing people and women arrested and raped in detention," Jimenez said. Private security and mercenary forces, involving more than 60,000 armed men, are also operating in the country. □

Travelers strike blow at blockade of Cuba



Buffalo, N.Y.—Some 300 people who traveled to Cuba on a trip with the Venceremos Brigade, Pastors for Peace, U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange and Africa Awareness struck a blow against the U.S. blockade of Cuba when they crossed back into the U.S. via both New York and Texas on Aug. 3. They marched, danced and chanted as they declared openly that they had traveled to Cuba.

At a welcoming picnic organized by local Buffalo, N.Y., activists, including members of the International Action Center, Buffalo City Council representatives declared their support and solidarity with ending the U.S. blockade of Cuba and defended both travel

challengers and the Cuban people's right to determine their own system.

In Cuba, the two travel groups had met with the families of the Cuban Five, political prisoners in U.S. custody for a decade now. The travelers pledged to multiply efforts to free the five Cuban heroes and win visitation rights for their family members, particularly Olga Salanueva and Adriana Perez.

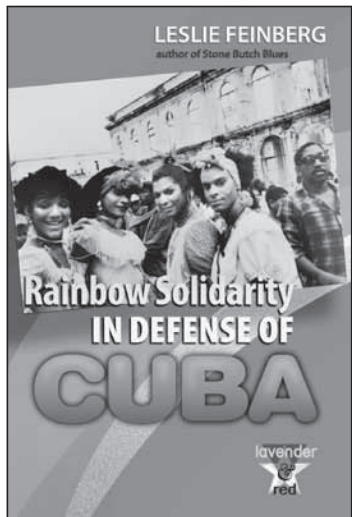
There was a marked difference in U.S. federal officials' attitude to the delegations this year, showing that the travel ban has been defeated on the ground. Now is the time to end the laws blockading revolutionary socialist Cuba!

Report and photo by Cheryl LaBash

Rainbow Solidarity In Defense of CUBA

This new book is a compilation of 25 articles about how the Cuban Revolution has worked to overturn prejudice against same-sex love from the colonial and imperial eras. The articles are part of the Lavender & Red series from Workers World weekly newspaper. The never-before-compiled information offers a factual vista on the trajectory of progress of the Cuban Revolution. It's a must-read to understand the revolutionary process required to uproot prejudice.

Order from www.Leftbooks.com



Forum on Iran calls for no U.S. intervention

‘Let Iranians solve their own problems’

By Deirdre Griswold
New York

Even a country that possesses arms as powerful as those of the United States cannot conquer through military might alone. That is the lesson of this period of seemingly endless U.S. imperialist invasions and occupations that began with the assault on Korea in 1950 and continues to the present.

The desire for self-determination of peoples who have known the horrors and humiliation of colonial and imperial domination and have decided to resist, whatever the cost, can and has worn down the invaders. It has eroded the political grip of the war hawks over the people in the imperialist countries and around the world. That happened in Korea and Vietnam. It is happening today in the Middle East.

The strategists in Washington who ponder world domination know this. They know that they must win at least a modicum of support at home to pursue military adventures abroad. If their effort to do this is too crude—as in the lies spun by the Bush/Cheney administration to justify its invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan—it can backfire and eventually lead to their ouster.

For some time the spin masters for war have been directing a well-orchestrated campaign of demonization against Iran, which is literally surrounded by U.S. military bases and warships. It reached a crescendo when Iran recently held its national elections.

At a forum held in the Solidarity Center here on Aug. 1, Iranians as well as U.S. speakers examined the complexity of the political situation in that country and took a strong stand against imperialist intervention of any kind. They urged others in the U.S. progressive movement to take a good look at who is behind the current campaign to invalidate the recent elections in Iran and bring about regime change there.

Sara Flounders, a co-chair of Stop War on Iran and the International Action Center, set the tone for the discussion in her opening remarks.

She reminded the audience that “We are confronted with enormous propaganda. When the media 24/7 grabs an issue; when the Congress without any discussion or debate unanimously votes to allocate tens of millions of dollars to intervene directly into Iranian affairs, as it did again just last week; when Vice President Biden assures three times on a national interview that Israel has a sovereign right to bomb Iran; and when there is a whole new round of threats, sanctions and deadlines on Iran, then we need to take time to remind activists of the ugly role of past U.S. interventions. ...”

“There are issues that arise in the political movement that become a dividing line, a watershed for years to come. It is important to note that imperialism has been able to capture mass movements in the past, even workers’ movements with genuine grievances, to use as a battering ram against a government that imperialism is working overtime to subvert and destabilize. We have seen this against struggling socialist countries and against anti-imperialist and nationalist governments in developing countries.”

Who the ‘reformers’ are

Ardeshtir Ommani, a co-founder of the American-Iranian Friendship Committee, shed light on the political forces inside Iran who are accusing the current government of Prime Minister Ahmadinejad of being undemocratic:



Manijeh Sabeh, Sara Flounders and Ardeshtir Ommani.

WWW PHOTOS: LEILANI DOWELL

“A former president of Iran, Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani, one of Iran’s wealthiest men, who is publicly known as ‘The Shark’ regarding financial transactions that led to his family’s massive accumulation of wealth during his presidency, led Friday prayer at Tehran University about a month and a half ago. In his sermon, Rafsanjani put stress on the ‘impending crisis’ which in his opinion has engulfed the country. ...

“As a reaction to this criticism, the pro-Ahmadinejad and Khamenei forces in attendance began chanting, ‘Down with the USA.’ Suddenly, as a clear expression of their class position, the pro-Rafsanjani forces began yelling out, ‘Down with China’ and ‘Down with Russia.’ ...

“In the White House, Zbigniew Brzezinski has been advising President Obama about the essentiality of breaking up Beijing-Moscow-Tehran relations. As we know, China, Russia and Iran, along with many countries of Africa and Latin America, strongly advocate that the current unipolar world order has to be replaced by a multipolar arrangement which would enhance the role of other nations, especially a multitude of smaller countries, in the running of world affairs. Furthermore, these three countries have seriously enacted the policy of replacing the U.S. dollar, as a sole world reserve currency, with a new basket of currencies that would reduce the arbitrary pressure of the United States on the currencies of other countries.”

Ommani added that the reformists seek to transfer a major part of the Iranian economy from public to private control and also to “remove the encumbrances in the way of U.S. Big Oil from reaching the Iranian oil reserves in the Caspian Sea.”

Phil Wilayto, who wrote the book “In Defense of Iran: Notes from a U.S. Peace Delegation’s Journey Through the Islamic Republic,” pointed out that few of the people in the U.S. who are being swept up in the anti-Iran campaign ask about the view of the workers, who have been Ahmadinejad’s main political base.

“You may have heard about the poll by the ‘Terror-Free Tomorrow’ group three weeks before the election in Iran,” said Wilayto. “It was funded by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, so this was not a leftist poll. And it predicted that Ahmadinejad would win two thirds of the vote, based on the support that he had in the country.” Ahmadinejad did win the election, but the opposition has accused the government of rigging it.

Wilayto cited a World Bank report showing that poverty had been drastically reduced in Iran, along with a narrowing of the income gap, showing why the current regime is popular with the masses. Oil revenues, which used to be siphoned off by U.S. and British imperialism, have also allowed Iran to provide health and education to the vast majority, including in rural areas, he said.

Manijeh Sabeh, an Iranian human rights and women’s rights activist, said that the situation in Iran “is very difficult for me, I tend not to see things in black and white.” She added, however, that “No matter where we come from, there should never be any support for the U.S. or any outside forces intervening in any country. There should be no sanctions.

“I am for a secular government and the Iranian government has a lot of problems. It is very repressive—I cannot close my eyes to that. Despite all this, Iran is a very progressive society and has always been and women have been at the forefront of the Iranian movement.” Sabeh emphasized that “The Iranian people are capable of taking care of their own issues and they don’t need outsiders to tell them what is right and what is wrong.”

Dustin Langley, a Navy veteran and organizer with the Stop War on Iran Campaign, reviewed the hundreds of millions of dollars the U.S. government has spent on manipulating public opinion here and in Iran in an effort to bring down the government. Much of this money has been funneled through the National Endowment for Democracy.

“The protests in Iran,” he said, “no doubt have many sincere participants

with legitimate grievances and concerns. But these protests are not spontaneous and the organizations behind them have received millions of dollars from the NED, from George Soros and from other sources in the United States.

“In the U.S.,” said Langley, “a group calling itself United4Iran came out of nowhere and the next day had protests in 105 cities with offices, phone numbers, fax machines, emails and staff. It makes me wonder where the money comes from.”

The final scheduled speaker was John Catalinotto, a managing editor of Workers World newspaper who reminded the audience of U.S. imperialism’s long history of interventions, especially its recent offensive to seize energy resources. “It is entirely consistent with their past misdeeds,” concluded Catalinotto, “that the corporate media and all imperialist politicians—at least in North America and Europe—have targeted the Iranian government over the elections and have praised the opposition demonstrations. They have exaggerated the support for the opposition, have exaggerated the state repression, and have given enormous publicity to the Iranian events compared, for example, to their treatment of the Honduran military coup.

“Whatever the motive of the protesters themselves in Tehran, the imperialists’ motive is to eliminate Iranian sovereignty and reverse the 1979 revolution.”

In the discussion period that followed, quite a few Iranians took the floor to elaborate on the main points that had been raised. They praised the International Action Center for informing the anti-imperialist left on this question and expressed hope that broader sectors of the progressive movement can be won over to support self-determination for Iran. The speeches can be seen and heard at youtube.com/user/PeoplesVideo. □

Haitians drown fleeing U.S.-installed regime

By Caleb T. Maupin

Two hundred Haitians on July 26 crammed themselves into a small sailing vessel, according to news reports. They were seeking to escape from a country that continues to be occupied by foreign troops and whose people suffer from massive poverty and starvation.

A survivor, Alces Julien, said the boat hit a reef after it spotted a police vessel off the Turks and Caicos Islands and tried to hide. (AP, July 28) The boat split open and those in it were cast into the sea. While more than 100 were eventually rescued, at least 85 Haitians drowned.

Countless other Haitians have drowned seeking to escape the results of U.S. intervention and the imposition of its “free” system of unregulated capitalism.

The Haiti from which the 200 people sought to escape is one where United Nations troops patrol the streets to keep in power a government installed by the U.S. The elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was removed by the United States in February 2004 in what Haitians refer to as a “coup-napping.” Later that year, a study by the University of Miami Law School found that “summary executions,” in which Haitians were put to death without due process, were a common “police tactic.” (“Haiti Human

Rights Investigation,” Nov. 11-21, 2004) Aristide had refused to sell off state-owned industries and demanded reparations from the French government for its crimes against the Haitian people. He was kidnapped with the assistance of the CIA and flown to Africa.

Some 80 percent of Haitians today live below the poverty line, even according to the CIA’s own “World Factbook.” Haiti has the highest infant mortality rate in Latin America and the lowest life expectancy as well. Only 52.9 percent of the population has had enough education to be considered literate.

As the world economy continues to be in crisis, Haiti’s U.S.-backed government continues to privatize state-owned enterprises, forcing unemployment to soar as those who worked in these enterprises are laid off. The Haitian Confederation of Workers continues to endure suppression by the government as it attempts to organize workers for a better life, which is supposedly legal under Haitian law.

On July 26—the same day this ill-fated ship left Haiti—Cuba, another Caribbean nation, was celebrating the anniversary of its Moncada rebellion. Revolutionary forces there eventually smashed and overthrew capitalism in Cuba and brought full employment, full literacy, and free health care, education and housing to all. □



Stop executions in Iraq

In the imperialist media, there is no equality among victims or alleged victims of state repression.

In June a young woman was killed in Iran. It is unclear who killed her or why. Yet Iran is a U.S. “enemy,” and so the whole world knows her given name—Neda. Her face quickly showed up on the T-shirts of protesters.

By Aug. 4, the usurpers in Honduras had killed six people who were peacefully protesting the military coup. Unless you follow the progressive Spanish-language press, you might not know this even happened. Of course you haven’t heard their names.

In Iraq, still occupied by 134,000 U.S. troops, still with a U.S. Embassy armed like a fortress, the regime plus its courts and prisons owe their very existence to the U.S. invasion and occupation. But the names of their potential victims are unprinted, or if printed, the individuals are demonized.

On March 10, 2007, Workers World published a story about Iraqi women who faced execution. (See workers.org.) One was charged with the killing of five officers in an attack on the occupation police. Another was charged with participating in an attack on a joint patrol of the Iraqi and U.S. armies in Baghdad; and a third with the killing of an official in the Green Zone in the course of a kidnapping.

To the vast majority of people in the world, even if the charges are true, these women are seen as freedom fighters taking legitimate action to defend their country. Given the state of Iraqi injustice under the U.S. occupation regime, it is likely that torture and rape led to their convictions. Even organizations like Amnesty International and the United Nations Human Rights Commission, though not sympathetic with the Iraqi resistance, have denounced the legal system in occupied Iraq.

Last year an international campaign stopped the executions. The U.N. Working Group on Arbitrary Detention stated then that “the three Iraqi women will not be executed until an appeals court has ruled on their cases.”

International supporters of human rights for Iraqis under the occupation commented: “This assurance came from Iraqi authorities. It is not enough. We demand to know the charges on which these three Iraqi women stand convicted. We demand

to know the date of their appeal hearings. We demand that a public statement is made. We demand that they be afforded all due protections under international human rights and humanitarian law.”

The suspicions behind these demands were justified. Now two of the women, Wassan Talib and Samar Saad ‘Abdullah, are again facing execution. According to Amnesty International, they are among at least nine women in Iraq facing imminent execution after recently having their death sentences confirmed. One of the condemned women says she was tortured into falsely confessing.

More than 1,000 people have been executed in Iraq since 2004. A dozen were executed this May. More than a hundred prisoners are on the Iraqi equivalent of death row.

Workers World joins with those in the Iraq Solidarity Association in Stockholm, Sweden, in their anger at the “absence of rights in Iraq under the occupation, an absence of rights for which the occupation power bears ultimate responsibility.”

And with them we say: “Stop the executions of the Iraqi women! Make public all information about the women! Recognize all the legal rights of the women! Guarantee a stop to the rapes and torture! Stop all executions in Iraq!” (www.iraksolidaritet.se) □

FBI arrests 7 anti-imperialist Muslims in North Carolina

By Dante Strobino
Raleigh, N.C.

On July 27 seven young Muslim men were arrested in Wake County and indicted in the Eastern District of North Carolina’s federal court on terrorism charges. An eighth man is currently being hunted in Pakistan. All were charged with conspiring to provide support to terrorists and conspiring to murder, kidnap, maim and injure people abroad.

The FBI claims that Daniel Boyd is the “ringleader” who attended a “training camp” in Afghanistan that schooled extremists such as Osama Bin Laden. Federal investigators used the “war on terrorism”—really a war on Muslims and Arabs—to claim that the men’s religious views were sufficiently relevant to believe they were planning violent actions, including a suicide mission, in Israel and Pakistan.

Daniel Patrick Boyd, 39; Hysen Sherifi, 24; Anes Subasic, 33; Zakariya Boyd, 20; Dylan Boyd, 22; Mohammad Omar Aly Hassan, 22; and Ziyad Yaghi, 21, were all indicted. An alleged cache of guns collected by Boyd and alleged arms training in rural Caswell County were also used to justify their arrest. (Raleigh News & Observer, July 27)

Given the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine and continued U.S. military and political support of aggressor-state Israel, it is justifiable to be angry at imperialist adventures in the Middle East. Daniel Boyd recently distanced himself from the mosque in Raleigh and imams in Durham because he had differing political views about supporting struggles in the Middle East. Now

Boyd’s political position is being used as “evidence” that he is a “violent jihadist.”

The main indictment comes after years of surveillance by the FBI and Department of Homeland Security, who witnessed several young Muslim men congregating around a shop owned by Boyd in Garner, N.C. Recently, the North Carolina General Assembly passed a “Gang Prevention Act” that defines gangs as anyone wearing shirts of the same colors. Police carrying out rampant brutality against young African-American men use similarly vague legal language.

Sensational media hype and anti-Muslim post-9/11 hysteria swarm around this case, making a fair trial for the eight men impossible. WRAL, News 14 and other local media have interviewed random neighbors of the Boyds and aired racist and anti-Muslim assumptions. One neighbor said he heard Arab-sounding music coming from the home, as if this were relevant evidence to the charge of supporting terrorism.

The media took the racism so far as to draw out Boyd’s past relationship to historically Black Shaw University. The News & Observer claimed Daniel Boyd “quit America in 1989” and referred to his family as a “clan.” (Aug. 2) WRAL and others felt it necessary to point out that Boyd’s middle name, “Saifullah,” means “sword of God.”

Media accounts also focused on the youth dropping out of high school or not finishing college and working at the Islamic center in Raleigh. In a press conference on July 28, the Muslim American Society stated, “This case should be litigated in the federal court, not the court of public opinion, and this litigation is not related to the Muslim community as an entity.”

This case comes on the heels of years of healing following attacks the Muslim community faced after 9/11. The weekend before the arrests, the Islamic Association of Raleigh hosted a public event, “Meet Your Muslim Neighbor.” It drew 600 people, including two Congress members, one cabinet secretary and several mayors, and was intended to combat anti-Muslim stereotypes and attacks. These arrests serve to set back these efforts.

In a further abuse of power just before the arrest, officers told Daniel Boyd’s spouse, Sabrina Boyd, that her husband and sons had been injured in a car crash. She was led to Duke Hospital, where she was separated from her daughters, handcuffed and told to cooperate with the investigation. The Council of American-Islamic Relations is calling on the U.S. Justice Department to investigate this cruel trick.

Attacks on immigrants, Muslims and oppressed people in general by talk-show hosts like Lou Dobbs and white supremacists like former Congressperson Tom Tancredo are whipping up reactionary hate groups around the country, who feed on the anger and fear caused by the growing economic crisis. These public media trials of alleged terrorism suspects serve to heighten the attacks on oppressed communities and destroy their organizations.

Only with multinational unity—by challenging and exposing the real incentives of U.S. imperialism to further divide and conquer the entire planet—will justice ever be won. □

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Capitalist crisis sharpens class struggle in Africa

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**
 Editor, Pan-African News Wire

The failure of capitalist methods of production and distribution is clearly illustrated by the way the collapse of the financial and industrial centers in Western Europe and the United States has devastated former colonial countries. Since late 2007 tens of millions of workers and farmers in several regions of the African continent have been severely affected by unemployment, rising commodities prices, food deficits and the decline in material aid from the industrialized states.

Meanwhile, the dominant imperialist power in the world, the United States, has continued to interfere in the internal affairs of developing states. Under the guise of fighting “terrorism,” “Islamic extremism” and “piracy,” the Pentagon has formed the Africa Command (AFRICOM), which is seeking to develop and strengthen “partnerships” with various governments on the continent. None of these military programs has improved the economic conditions in Africa.

In fact, the economic crisis has affected the most vulnerable sectors of African societies. Where there is greater industrialization, for example, in the Republic of South Africa, striking workers have demanded higher wages and nationalization of key industries. In countries like Kenya, where agricultural production and tourism have been highly significant within the national economies, the failure of crops and the threat of famine have created tension and civil unrest.

In Somalia, in the Horn of Africa, the continuing role of U.S. imperialism in attempting to control and shape the political character of the burgeoning state has created guerrilla resistance and mass displacement. The oil-producing state of Nigeria in West Africa has undergone attacks on the petroleum industry, prompting the government to launch a military offensive in the Niger Delta as well as an attempt to grant amnesty to members of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta.

Strike season in South Africa

Beginning July 27, a series of strikes hit South Africa’s transportation, municipal and mining sectors. These work stoppages followed violent demonstrations in several townships the week before, protesting the inadequate delivery of city services and the need for increased production of housing.

In Johannesburg, municipal workers gathered for a mass demonstration on July 27 demanding a 15-percent increase in salaries. The workers asked for enough wage increases to counter inflation, which is a byproduct of the deepening economic crisis.

According to Toronto’s Globe & Mail, “The South African Municipal Workers’ Union (SAMWU) and the Independent Municipal and Allied Trade Union, which say they represent 150,000 municipal workers, want a 15-percent wage hike to cushion their members as the country grapples with its first economic recession in 17 years. They have rejected an 11.5-percent wage increase. Annual inflation was 8 percent in May.” (July 27)

In the same article SAMWU General Secretary Mthandeki Nhlapo said, “Indications are that the majority of workers, if not 90 percent of them, are out on strike. Refuse collection is badly affected. Other

services like electricity are also affected. Across all services within municipalities, the effect is visible.”

In addition to municipal and transport employees, workers in the chemical sector have also gone out on strike. In the gold and coal sectors, unions were scheduled to decide on July 28 whether to accept existing wage offers, which would avoid strikes in some of the world’s largest mines.

Although the newly elected African National Congress governmental leadership under President Jacob Zuma was heavily supported by the trade unions and the South African Communist Party, because of the campaign’s stated goals of directly addressing the conditions of the workers and poor inside the country, the economic crisis has prompted these same social forces to engage the bosses in industry as well as state structures.

The ANC Youth League raised the demand for the nationalization of the mining industry in an effort to save jobs, increase salaries and improve working conditions for employees. However, the Zuma government has rejected this appeal.

At the same time a campaign pledge by the ANC to create 500,000 new jobs is proving to be more difficult to keep than anticipated, in light of the fall in prices for exports and the impact this is having on industry as well as the government.

Kenya: Threat of famine increases tension

In the U.S.-allied East African nation of Kenya, the failure of agricultural policies has created serious food deficits. In Kenya’s northern region, the shortages have caused conflicts over access to land for cattle grazing and water distribution.

Kenya’s government has sent security forces to quell conflict among groups in competition over resources within the pastoral communities around Isiolo. Recent reports indicate that 20 people have died in clashes.

Despite the Kenyan government’s close alliance with the U.S. under the leadership of Prime Minister Raila Odinga and President Mwai Kibaki, this relationship has done nothing to improve the conditions of people in either the rural areas or the cities. Prime Minister Odinga recently delivered an address to the nation, saying that food shortages will affect both urban and farming areas.

At present the U.S. has warships stationed off the coast of Kenya in the Indian Ocean to ostensibly fight “piracy” along the coastal areas of neighboring Somalia. However, very little assistance has been provided by the U.S. and the other im-

perialist states to deal with the growing problems of food deficits and the consequent famine.

Somalia: Struggle against U.S. interference continues

In the Horn of Africa nation of Somalia, which shares a border with Kenya, the Transitional Federal Government is being bolstered by the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM). The AMISOM forces consist of 4,300 troops from the U.S.-backed states of Uganda and Burundi.

Fighting between the resistance forces—both Harakat Al-Shabab Mujahideen and Hisbul Islam—and the TFG and AMISOM is still causing dislocation of people from the capital of Mogadishu and other areas of the central and southern regions of the country. Ugandan leader Yoweri Museveni has stated recently that his country is willing to send more troops to back the TFG government.

Off the coast of Somalia, a flotilla of U.S., NATO and other warships is patrolling the waters in order to combat what the imperialists call “piracy” by patrol boats that have taken over cargo vessels. Ships from many countries transport billions of dollars in goods and military equipment through the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean. In April the U.S. Navy killed three Somali teenagers and arrested another after they undertook negotiations to return a cargo vessel that had been captured with an American captain on board.

Washington indicates it wants to maintain a long-term presence in the region. “The [U.S.] Navy advised mariners to use a designated corridor when transiting the Gulf of Aden. The corridor is patrolled by 30 warships, supported by aircraft from 16 nations.” (Associated Press, July 27)

U.S. military presence, both direct and indirect, has not brought stability or prosperity to the people of Somalia. As a result of U.S. failure to control the political situation in Somalia, Washington has focused attention on the Somali community in Minnesota, claiming that resistance forces are recruiting youth there to fight the TFG in Mogadishu.

Nigeria: U.S.-based oil firms under attack

Over the last several months in the oil-producing West African state of Nigeria, there have been numerous attacks on the operations of the U.S.-based petroleum industry in the Niger Delta region. The government offered the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta an amnesty agreement in an effort to halt the destruction of drilling equipment and the

seizure of industry employees.

The Nigerian Federal Government has launched a major two-pronged offensive against members of MEND over the last several months. The military executed one leading figure in the movement, Ken Niweigha, in late May. The government has also offered amnesty to Henry Okah, another MEND leader, who was extradited from Angola after escaping the country. Neither track has quelled the unrest in the oil-rich areas in the Niger Delta.

Other repressive government actions have also taken place in the northern region of Nigeria, where police have reportedly killed more than 30 people in the northeast state of Bauchi. According to a July 27 Reuters news agency report, approximately 70 people with guns and grenades destroyed a police station in the state’s capital on July 26 and later retreated after an intense gun battle with security forces. Later reports say 700 people have been killed in battles in northern Nigeria. (AP, Aug. 3)

The need to break with capitalism

Obviously the integration of the African continent with the world capitalist system has not brought economic development or social stability. Consequently, organizations representing the workers and farmers must look to alternative forms of ownership, production and distribution of the wealth within society.

The fact that Africa is dependent on the imperialist states for the export of raw materials and agricultural commodities, in order to earn foreign exchange, places the continent and its people at the mercy of the imperialist states. With the Western countries undergoing the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, the so-called developing states will sink deeper into poverty and social dislocation.

In the Western imperialist states, the ruling class is telling the workers and oppressed to wait for the capitalist system to rebound for the economic conditions of the masses to improve. In the developing states, the governments and peoples are offered failed models of “development,” which only serve to increase their dependence on the industrialized states.

Only socialism offers a solution to both the imperialist countries and the former colonial and neo-colonial states. The wealth within society, which is created by the workers and farmers, must be distributed for the benefit of the majority. In order for there to be genuine economic growth and development during this period, the masses must be at the center of the decision-making process and the implementation of economic policy. □

MUNDO OBRERO

Hondureños se mantienen firmes

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Quizás los estrategas estadounidenses teman que este llamado pueda ser exitoso y que la intransigencia de Micheletti pueda resultar en una división del ejército y que una parte de él se una a la insurrección popular. Éste puede ser el porqué Washington quiera trabajar con elementos en el ejército hondureño para lograr algunas concesiones que pudieran restaurar al gobierno constitucional, aunque sea uno más débil. Éste queda por verse.

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Striking workers in South Africa

Hondureños se mantienen firmes en contra del gobierno ilegítimo

Por Berta Joubert-Ceci

Manuel Zelaya Rosales, el legítimo presidente de Honduras, cruzó la frontera con Nicaragua para entrar a su patria el 24 de julio después de declarar como fracasada la segunda ronda de negociaciones mediada por el Presidente Oscar Arias de Costa Rica, escogido para esto por los Estados Unidos.

Una vez en territorio hondureño, Zelaya trató sin éxito de comunicarse con el jefe de las Fuerzas Armadas. Sin embargo, tuvo que regresar a territorio nicaragüense debido a la presencia de 400 soldados fuertemente armados, incluyendo franco tiradores, listos para tomar acción en contra suya y de las masas populares desarmadas que llegaron de todas partes del país para recibirlo.

En respuesta a esto, el Frente Nacional Popular de Resistencia Contra el Golpe, (FNPRG), el cual ha estado organizando huelgas y otras acciones populares desde el día del golpe el 28 de junio, permanece firme en su demanda del regreso incondicional de Zelaya a su puesto y de concertar una Asamblea Constituyente.

Zelaya había aceptado los siete puntos originales en la “propuesta para la paz” de Arias. El régimen del golpe liderado por Roberto Micheletti, quien ha recibido ayuda de los asesores de Estados Unidos muy cercanos a la Secretaria de Estado Hillary Clinton, rechazó ese plan y propuso uno suyo.

Como resultado, Arias modificó el plan inicial y el 22 de julio produjo una propuesta de nueve puntos donde el regreso del Presidente Zelaya a su puesto—el primer punto en el plan original—fue relegado al sexto lugar. Esta movida fue claramente una concesión a los golpistas, quienes rechazan el regreso de Zelaya. Esto es lo mismo que entregar Zelaya a las fuerzas represivas de los golpistas.

Zelaya rehusó aceptar esto, prometiendo regresar a Honduras desde Nicaragua. El Presidente inició su viaje hacia la frontera de Nicaragua con Honduras acompañado por el Canciller de Venezuela Nicolás Maduro, la Canciller de Honduras Patricia Rodas y otros partidarios.

La resistencia con nueva energía a pesar de la represión

Las personas que ofrecen resistencia al golpe en Honduras han estado llevando a cabo constantes acciones por tres semanas—huelgas, manifestaciones y otras protestas. Al saber que su Presidente regresaba, el pueblo hondureño, bajo el liderazgo del FNPRG, reinició con energía renovada una huelga general el 23 de julio y comenzó a movilizar marchas hacia la frontera con Nicaragua.

Esto no era tarea fácil. El régimen golpista ha militarizado el país. Poco después de saber sobre los planes de Zelaya, los golpistas enviaron cientos de soldados fuertemente armados hacia la frontera, a la vez que declaraban un toque de queda en el área fronteriza. Los soldados detuvieron autobuses y automóviles que llevaban manifestantes, y cuando la gente continuaba a pie, el ejército les rodeó, no permitiendo que la gente siguiera ni regresara.

La gente estaba tratando de llegar a El

Paraíso, uno de los tres puntos de entrada a Honduras desde Nicaragua. Zelaya primero se dirigió al Paraíso, pero la presencia del ejército evitó su entrada. Zelaya entonces se dirigió hacia la siguiente entrada, Las Manos, donde eventualmente pudo entrar por unos minutos antes de que las tropas, amenazando con una masacre, lo forzaran regresar a Nicaragua.

Una carta desde Honduras

Según el reporte de Dick Emanuelsson del 27 de julio en la lista electrónica de “Honduras en Resistencia”, un reportero de Nicaragua le llamó para decirle que entre 4.000 y 5.000 hondureños/as han cruzado la frontera de Nicaragua para ir a Las Manos donde está Zelaya.

Una carta de Martha Silva desde Honduras a una amiga en Venezuela, circulada a través del Internet, muestra la resistencia y la valentía del pueblo, como también la terrible represión que enfrentan. Como miles que desafiando el toque de queda y la represión del ejército, Silva intentó ir a recibir a Zelaya.

Escribió Silva: “Caminé desde El Arenal hasta El Paraíso para ir al encuentro de Mel más de 50 km. bajo sol, agua, fango, hambre sed y etc. Cuando sólo nos faltaban 11 kilómetros la policía nos detuvo y nos llevaron en una patrulla hasta las celdas del Paraíso”.

[Las fuerzas represivas están arresando a veintenas de personas, acusadas solamente de haber desafiado el toque de queda; en general las liberan después de unas horas en un claro intento por desalentar a la gente de seguir con las protestas.—BJC]

“Ya libre me uní al plantón obligatorio que está en Alauca, El Paraíso, todo el viernes no pasó de golpearlos y tirar bombas lacrimógenas, hasta que a las 11 a.m. se armó la balacera y nos hirieron dos compañeros. El resto del día la pasamos entre gritos y gases, pero el Goriletti puso el toque de queda desde las 12 del medio día, estos gorilas hicieron que el pueblo cerrara los negocios, y les prohibieron que nos vendan comida y agua o que nos den albergue, algunas personas asustadas cerraron los negocios, otros nos vendían a escondidas”.

“Entonces nos cercaron con los batallones por ambos lados y decidimos hacerle la vida imposible, hicimos fogatas con llantas, formamos barricadas con piedras y palos, teníamos como una especie de carnaval con música para todos los gustos hasta que el agua nos apagó las fogatas y teníamos más de 50 rastras furgones estacionadas y con producto que se echa a perder por que después de tres días pues si son comestibles como leche, jugos se descomponen por la acción del sol, nos sirvieron para pasar la tormenta y como hotel”.

“Bueno la noche avanzaba y terminó mi turno y traté de dormir alrededor de las 10 p.m., pues uno de los jóvenes con los que encendimos las llantas, amaneció muerto, tenía 24 años”.

“Nos informan el forense y los peritos, que fue salvajemente torturado y que tenía 42 puñaladas, los que sobrevivimos la década de los 80 sabemos que así paso con un compañero de la U.R.P. llamado

Félix Martínez, como un mensaje para la izquierda de aquellos tiempos, sabemos que esos eran los métodos aplicados por la doctrina de seguridad nacional del asesino de Billy Joya y Álvarez Martínez y ahora se repite la historia”.

Joya, un capitán retirado del ejército hondureño, es asesor de seguridad nacional de Micheletti. Estuvo a cargo del comando “Cobra” dirigido por oficiales de los EEUU en los años 1980 y era miembro del Batallón 316 que torturó, desapareció y asesinó veintenas de hondureños/as durante esa época.

Estado de emergencia en la frontera con Nicaragua

El constante toque de queda y la represión han creado una zona donde el abuso de los derechos humanos se comete continuamente contra las fuerzas de resistencia. Varias delegaciones de organizaciones de derechos humanos han documentado los abusos del régimen golpista desde el golpe del 28 de junio.

El último informe, con fecha del 27 de julio, se centra específicamente en los abusos cometidos desde el 24 de julio. Afirma que desde entonces hay una “situación muy tensa en Las Manos”, el ejército y la policía han establecido cerca de 18 retenes en las carreteras, cientos de manifestantes han sido detenidos/as, y al menos 2.000 personas se encuentran atrapadas entre los retenes, sin poder moverse o recibir alimentos, medicamentos o servicios básicos. Los militares no han permitido que ninguna ayuda humanitaria entre en la zona. (rebellion.org) Ha habido múltiples violaciones, en contra de la libertad de expresión, el hostigamiento y las amenazas contra periodistas, por lo menos seis asesinatos—entre ellos el asesinato de dos dirigentes del izquierdista Partido Unificación Democrática—y amenazas de muerte contra casi todos/as los líderes de la resistencia.

El 26 de julio, antes del entierro de Pedro Magdiel, mientras el liderazgo de la resistencia estaba reuniéndose en El Paraíso para planificar las acciones de la próxima semana, se escuchó una explosión. Una bomba había sido lanzada contra el edificio. Afortunadamente nadie resultó herido.

Las acciones de Washington contra el pueblo hondureño

Desde que Zelaya aumentó el salario mínimo y se unió a la Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América (ALBA)—el enemigo número uno de las corporaciones transnacionales basadas en los Estados Unidos—tanto las empresas hondureñas como las múltiples corporaciones estadounidenses que operan en Honduras se han puesto en contra de Zelaya. Desde Exxon-Mobil a las maquiladoras, los dueños tienen miedo de perder sus ganancias y que vayan en vez, a beneficiar a la población que es mayoritariamente pobre.

Entonces, al igual que hizo la United Fruit en los años 50 (ahora Chiquita Brands), estas corporaciones tomaron acción en coordinación con la oligarquía pro yanqui hondureña. Ahora ellas trabajan no solamente con el Pentágono y

organizaciones relacionadas, sino con organizaciones que aparentan ser “más suaves”, entidades imperialistas “pro-democracia” como la Fundación Nacional para la Democracia (National Endowment for Democracy—NED), la Agencia para el Desarrollo Internacional (U.S. Agency for International Development) y una campaña internacional organizada y llevada a cabo a través de los medios de difusión corporativos basados en los Estados Unidos. Ésta campaña mediática incluyó un editorial en el Wall Street Journal del 27 de julio escrito por Micheletti en el cual trató de justificar el golpe.

En un excelente artículo de investigación publicado en la edición del periódico cubano Granma del 8 de julio, Eva Golinger escribe, “El senador republicano John McCain está detrás de la visita a Washington de los representantes del gobierno de facto en Honduras. McCain, conocido por su dura postura contra Venezuela, Bolivia y otros países en la región considerados ‘antiimperialistas’, ha organizado una ‘rueda de prensa’ para los representantes golpistas a las 15:00 este martes en el prestigioso Club Nacional de Prensa en la capital estadounidense”.

Golinger continúa: “John McCain es el jefe de la junta directiva del Instituto Republicano Internacional (IRI), entidad considerada el brazo internacional del Partido Republicano de los Estados Unidos, y uno de los cuatro ‘grupos clave’ de la Fundación Nacional para la Democracia. Durante el último año, el IRI ha estado trabajando en Honduras con fondos de la NED por encima de 1,2 millones de dólares, para influir en los partidos políticos y ‘apoyar iniciativas para implementar posiciones políticas durante las campañas del 2009’. El IRI pondrá énfasis especial en Honduras, país que tiene elecciones presidenciales y legislativas en noviembre del 2009”.

Uno de los recipientes de los fondos fue el Consejo Hondureño de Empresas Privadas (COHEP), el cual está detrás del golpe debido a su oposición al aumento del salario mínimo y a las posibilidades de cualquier intento de prevenir privatizaciones de parte de Zelaya.

Un futuro incierto

¿Qué sucederá ahora en Honduras? Aunque Micheletti ha rechazado la posibilidad del regreso de Zelaya, un artículo en el New York Times del 26 de julio dice claramente que el “Ejército en Honduras respalda el plan sobre Zelaya”. El Times reporta que “El comunicado [que anunció la decisión del ejército] fue escrito en Washington luego de días de conversaciones entre oficiales hondureños de medio nivel y asistentes congresionales estadounidenses. Publicado en el sitio en la red de las Fuerzas Armadas hondureñas, avaló el llamado Acuerdo de San José que fue fraguado en Costa Rica”. Éste incluye el regreso de Zelaya a su puesto como presidente.

Las manifestaciones populares en pro de Zelaya en Honduras han intentado hablar con los soldados rasos y los oficiales de bajos rangos, pidiéndoles que se unan al pueblo y que no lo repriman.

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